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HINTS TO PHOTOGRAPH PORTRAITISTS.

THE photographic portraitist labors under the disadvantage, that however perfect his taste or knowledge of art, he has not absolute control, either over the forms he must delineate, or the relations of light and dark which shall exist in his model. He can, however, control the positions, and the light and shadow, so as to secure the most pleasing and characteristic lines these models possess, and he can, by the selection and arrangement of his accessories, secure the harmonious disposal of lines and of tones in his picture, the liberal use of accessories now customary in photographic portraiture permitting unusual facilities in this direction; but these should be used so as to secure unity and simplicity, harmony and breadth.

One of the first considerations in connection with portraiture, and especially where, as in card pictures, the full length of the figure is shown, will be as to position. This has much to do with the expression of character, as well as pictorial effect. Before speaking of the position of the model, a word or two in regard to the position in the picture may not be out of place, as this affects the general result more than at first sight may be imagined. The figure should never, or at least very rarely, be exactly in the middle or equidistant from each side of the picture; nothing is more formal or destructive to pictorial effect than such a position. As a general principle, more space should be in front of the figure than behind, unless some peculiarity of arrangement in the accessories suggest a different disposal. If the figure be placed equidistant from the top and bottom of the picture, it is still more destructive of suggestive truth and pictorial effect than if equidistant from the sides. The distance from the top and bottom is the chief means of suggesting the height of the figure. The nearer the head is to the top of the picture, the taller the figure will appear; and the greater the space overhead, the shorter will be the appearance of the model. Where a series of portraits of a specific size is issued, as in the card portraits now common, a specific proportion might with propriety be adopted. The pictures are, for instance, generally about three inches and a half in length; on such a size, a standing figure six feet in height might properly be made three inches high in the picture. If, then, the remaining half inch were divided so that the feet of the figure were one-eighth of an inch from the bottom, and the head three-eighths from the top, a fair suggestion of the true proportion would be obtained. In larger portraits, especially busts, the position is not so important, but should still receive attention. A bust in profile, or three-quarter face, should have more space in front of the head than behind; a bust presenting the direct full face may without impropriety have the head equidistant from the sides.

The position of the model may be varied without limit; but it should be the aim to secure both grace and character. Not less important than these, in producing a satisfactory effect, is the presence of a purpose or object in the position. It is not intended by this to imply that the sitter should be in all cases engaged in some occupation, but care should be taken to avoid the suggestion of either entire vacancy, or the self-consciousness of having a portrait taken. In the portrait of a lady a variety of resources from this may be found; she may be examining a bouquet, arranging a vase of flowers, buttoning a glove, examining a picture, reading a letter. In the portraits of gentlemen, of course, the same occupations would be less suitable; but others are available; even the conventional book held in the hand need not necessarily be arranged in the common-place conventional manner.

Entire repose is by no means inadmissible, but care should be used to secure the absolute feeling and appearance of intelligent repose, avoiding alike effect and vacuity. In all cases, straight lines and angles should be avoided as much as possible in arranging the position. The figure perfectly upright, without inclination or curve of any kind, is not graceful in any one, and in a lady is specially awkward and undesirable. The figure may lean against a column or a chair, or in a variety of ways a little inclination may be induced, and curved flowing lines secured. In standing, the weight of the body should rest on one foot; this will secure a more perfect sensation of ease and balance than can possibly be obtained when the figure is supported on both feet. Whatever action may be desired in the model should not be secured at the expense of ease;

there can be no grace or pictorial effect in the suggestion of an over-strained muscle or dislocated limb.

As regards the question of composition, the greater the simplicity the more perfect will be the result. Elaboration or complexity is undesirable at all times in portraiture, and in photographic portraiture especially so. It is, however, an important point, that a proper balance of lines, and of light and dark, be secured. If all the lines in a picture tended in one direction, a most uncomfortable effect would be produced; or if all the objects or masses were accumulated at one side, leaving the other bare and empty, the result would be just as unsatisfactory. All pictures should have at least one principal light, to which all the rest is subordinate. This, in portraiture, is generally the face, upon which the chief interest is supposed to be concentrated. The lights may be repeated in varying forms and more subdued degree, so as to carry them throughout the picture, a general principle of chiaroscuro requiring that some light should be carried into the deepest shadows, and vice versa. It is desirable, also, that the weight or heaviest part of the picture, both in color and form, should be at the base. Thus, the standing figure of a man unsupported by accessories is very uncomfortable-looking; the picture requires a broader base. This may be secured by the arrangement of accessories, or even by the simple resource of a stick or umbrella in his hand, placed at an angle with the body. The best effect is produced when the darkest masses are arranged at the bottom of the picture, as that also tends to the production of equilibrium or balance. Let it be distinctly remembered, however, that these and all other effects in composition must appear natural, and of course the artifice must not be seen. The veriest smatterers in art have an impression that the pyramidal form is the most satisfactory in composition; but it requires the skill of an experienced artist to secure the effect without obtruding the means.

Contrast is an important element in pictorial effect: contrast in lines, and contrast in tones. The value of curved lines will be best made apparent by contrasting them with straight lines; relief, vigor, and brilliancy are obtained by due contrast and variety of tones. Contrasts, however, should never be harsh or violent. Masses of black and white brought crudely together, without gradation of any kind, certainly produce contrast, but without anything of pictorial effect. One of the most important qualities in a picture is breadth, of which crude and harsh contrasts are entirely destructive. The immediate juxtaposition of black and white draperies or accessories should, therefore, be as much as possible avoided. Both are necessary in a picture, but they should always be more or less graduated in their approach to each other. For this reason the background of a photograph is generally best of a middle tint, which does not contrast harshly with either dark or light draperies.

An important element in securing the harmonious contrast of tones is the judicious lighting of the model. By all means avoid a direct front light, which is destructive of all relief. Let the light fall on the model at an angle of about 45°; direct vertical light should be carefully avoided; side light may, on the other hand, be freely used. Direct light, it should be remembered, gives force; diffused light, softness. The best results are obtained by judiciously combining the two; direct light to give form or contour, diffused light to give texture. Too much diffused light leads to flatness and tameness, by weakening the shadows. Some positive light and shadow are necessary to force and vigor.

In small full-length portraits a variety of accessories and pictorial backgrounds are permissible. In the use of these, one of the most important things is the preservation of keeping, by the combination of such pictorial effects in the background, and such accessories only, as are harmonious with each other and with the character of the sitter. Nothing can be more ludicrously incongruous than the combinations sometimes perpetrated; the furniture of a drawing-room apparently standing on the sea-shore; a lady in evening dress standing amid Swiss mountains; a stolid old gentleman sitting amid vases and balustrades, all wreathed with flowers. Or even when keeping is preserved in these respects, it is not uncommon to see gross violations of all possible perspective; objects in the background lighted from one side, while the model is lighted from the opposite direction. But it is not necessary, because a column, a curtain, or a chair is

really good of the kind, and free from the commonplace or vulgar in design and style, that it should appear in every picture; nor because a balustrade is real and well designed, that it should be obtruded in advance of the sitter. Variety is desirable in accessories, both as regards color and form, so as to be readily able to meet the exigencies of composition. In using painted backgrounds, care should be taken that the light and shadow correspond with that on the model, and it is desirable to avoid designs, such as foregrounds of tessellated pavement, which show, in a very definite manner, the exact direction of the perspective lines, and thus suggest one point of light for the landscape, and another for the figure. The carpet, or whatever may be used for the foreground, should be dark in color, and not of a pattern too strikingly defined.

FLOWER PAINTING IN WATER COLORS.

I.

A FLOWER having been selected as a study, it must be placed as naturally as possible in a vase of water. The first object is a good outline. The greatest pains must be taken to draw carefully and correctly every part of the flower, beginning generally in the centre, particularly if it is a full view which is to be represented. Every petal must have its own complete outline, not only indicated, but carefully defined; and let it not be considered that the time thus occupied is lost, for the study of the flower thus carefully made, will impart so perfect an understanding of it, as greatly to simplify the after process of coloring; and any attempt to finish a drawing, of which the outline is incorrect, will be simply time thrown away.

A small brush, filled with a pale tint resembling the local color of the flower, is the best instrument with which to draw the outline; but until a little practice has given ease and readiness in use of the brush, an HB black-lead pencil will be found more convenient, as the markings from this are easily effaced. Care, however, must be taken that the lines drawn with the pencil are so pale as to be barely visible; for nothing can be more disagreeable to the eye, or more unnatural, than a dark line, which no subsequent operation of the brush can efface. If the outline be too dark, it must be lightened with a little bread before proceeding to color.

The learner is advised not to begin by drawing more than may probably be finished before leaving the study, as a flower is generally far too much changed before the following day, to afford an opportunity of its then being successfully completed.

The outline being finished, the card must be lightly wetted in all parts intended to be colored, by passing the flat brush moderately full of water gently over it. If clear soft water cannot be procured, use boiled water. When quite dry, the flower should be washed smoothly over with a tint matching as closely as possible the lighter tones of its own local color. This wash should be begun at the upper left-hand side, proceeding quickly to the right and downward. Beginners generally experience a little difficulty in this process, at first; but if attention be paid to keeping the brush equally full of color until it is completed, the difficulty will be easily surmounted.

Beginners frequently exhaust the color in the brush before filling it afresh; the consequence of which is, that the new supply of color flows back into the former, leaving, when dry, a distinct mark, which is not only undesirable, but impossible to be obliterated without sponging the whole entirely out with clean water and recommencing.

Fresh color must, therefore, be taken so frequently, that no difference can be perceived between the tint of that which flows from the brush, and that which is already laid on; the large pool left when the wash is completed (so constantly a difficulty until dexterity in handling is obtained), can be best disposed of by drawing the brush gradually to a fine point against the extreme outline.

When the color thus laid on is perfectly dry, the shadows must be carefully painted in, pains being taken to match their color with that of nature. The shadows generally appear, in some parts, to be insensibly lost and blended with the pure color of the flower. This effect may be produced by passing over their edges, while still wet, a clean brush, rather dryer than that with which they have been painted. The

